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Chocolate giant Ferrero wins three-year battle against Chinese counterfeiters

By NICK PISA

Ambassadors around the world are celebrating after Italian confectionary giant Ferrero won a three-year battle against a Chinese firm producing fakes of its famous nutty Ferrero Rocher chocolates.

The praline filled sweets are famous for a TV advertisement which featured them being served up at diplomatic receptions and being the ideal end to a dinner.

The slogan was an attractive guest telling her host as she seductively nibbled a chocolate: "Ambassador, with these Ferrero Rocher you are really spoiling us."

However since the early 1980s a Chinese firm has been selling cheap imitations identically packaged and often alongside the gold-wrapped original Ferrero Rocher chocolates.

Turin-based Ferrero Rocher began legal action against Chinese firm Montresor three years ago and today the case concluded in Beijing with the Chinese Supreme Court ordering the firm to stop producing its virtually identical "Tresor Dore" chocolates.

Montresor was also ordered to pay Ferrero Rocher "symbolic" damages of £35,000.

Delighted Giovanni Ferrero, the firm's president and who recently took over from Silvio Berlusconi as Italy's richest man with £5.5billion, said: "This ruling finally secures the rights of our flagship brand of gold-wrapped pralines.

"I have also telephoned the Italian ambassador in China Riccardo Sessa to thank him for the Italian government's support in this matter both in and out of court."

Today's ruling sentence was hailed as a landmark for the many Italian producers of quality food whose products are copied by Chinese manufacturers.

In a statement Ferrero added: "This is an important victory for all Italian firms, because the copies of 'Made in Italy' products are, unfortunately, a widespread phenomenon.

"It is already hard for Italian companies, and foreign ones in general, to get into China, overcome resistance put up against foreign products, build up a commercial network and invest in the country only to be faced with a strong and invisible enemy like the counterfeiting industry."

Italian industry chiefs say that 86% of the counterfeit fake goods seized in Europe which originate from China are copies of Italian products with the majority being clothes, food and shoes.

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